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ABSTRACT

The various art forms among Chicanos have served as basic forms of total expression for the people. Until recently the Chicano aesthetic has not received the attention or financial support needed to flourish beyond the survival level and become an institutionalized form. Philanthropic institutions have ignored and, in many cases, eliminated the expression of any value aesthetic not representing traditional and explored mainstream. A recent report to the National Endowment for the Arts shows the lack of support for Chicano art. Several myths have prevailed regarding the Chicano art form, i.e., it is confined to mere political expression, is regional and provincial, and is a fad of the sixties, and Chicanos only create for their own communities. These are poor excuses to limit the resources. Because of the value of the expression of the Chicano aesthetic and its lack of support, the Chicano Humanities and Arts Council (CHAC) was created. CHAC, an organization of individual Chicano artists and Chicano organizations, has proposed to increase communication and understanding. Through the support of the nation's philanthropic institutions, the financial support necessary to do this work and provide Chicano artists with opportunities toward their enhanced individual achievements can be attained. (NQA)

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HISPANIC ARTS PHILANTHROPY
A STATEMENT ON THE STATE OF THE ART

BY

DR. LORENZO A. TRUJILLO

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HISPANIC ARTS PHILANTHROPY
A STATEMENT ON THE STATE OF THE ART

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Introduction

The Chicano artistic community is and has been a viable and totally functioning entity since the first settlements in the Americas. The various art forms among the Chicano have served as basic forms of total expression for the people through changing times and situations. Art expression for the Chicano has acted in a role of educating our people; as a factor of ethnic solidarity; for establishing and maintaining a sense of self identity; as a means of communication and for unity; as inner group therapy; to pass on the true history of the people; and, to promote a positive sense of self integrity and well being. These characteristic benefits of the arts are not unique to the Chicano aesthetic but are universal to man.

> One of the most common uses of dance in ancient Greece was in education. The leading Greek philosophers strongly supported this art, as an ideal integration of the body and spirit...Socrates urged that it be taught more widely, saying that those who honor the Gods most beautifully in dances are best in war. Plato wrote,'to sing well and to dance well is to be well educated'(Kraus, 1969, p. 37).
>
> The Warriors of Sparta trained as dancers in preparation for war. Dance among the ancient Greeks was considered as basic to a sense of nationalism, pride, identity, strength, and as an excellent approach to education(Trujillo, 1979,p. 42).

The usage of dance for the aforementioned purposes is also true of other art forms. The "cuento"(short story) has been employed by all people to maintain historical and cultural traditions. The poem has been a form of relating current news events and as a medium of education. The mural, since the time of the cave man, has told us of the history and realities of daily life. Audiences have always found theatre to be entertaining, while it served the playwrites as a tool of expression of the needs of the time. Man has used aesthetic expression as the focal

agent through which he becomes socialized, educated, and in the process learns of his true self identity. The history and psychology create the cultural aesthetic. "This past creates the present and strives to become the future"(Trujillo, 1974, p. 82).

History

The Chicano aesthetic has until recently been an art form that has not received the attention or the financial support that it needs in order to flourish beyond the survival level and to become an institutionalized form.

Philanthropic institutions have chosen to ignore and in many cases eliminate the expression of any value aesthetic that does not represent traditional and explored mainstream. A more historical example of this occurrence is found in the development of the Mexican Folklorico Dance form. Immediately upon its emergence and in its initial developmental stages, the Inquisition declared the form as sacrilegious and punishable by excommunication, incarceration, and other forms of carnal and social punishment. Excommunication, incarceration, and other forms of carnal and social punishment still occur, although it may be disguised in differing methods.

One of these methods is the non-support of new and creative ideas. Philanthropy, by its very definition is "the effort to increase the well-being of mankind, as by charitable donations"(The American Heritage Dictionary, 1973, p. 531). Artistic expression has and is perceived as man's basic tool to increase and enhance the well-being of mankind. Therefore, based on it's many benefits, as witnessed by the history of mankind, it would only seem logical that philanthropic organizations would and should support such endeavors.

Unfortunately, the history has shown the opposite to be true, especially relative to the question of the support of the Chicano

aesthetic. In a recent report to the National Endowment for the Arts, the history of support from the Endowment reads as follows:

Support for Hispanic Arts

	FY 1976	FY 1977	FY 1978
# of Grants	82	132	120
% of Grants	1.9%	3.1%	2.5%
$ (millions)	$1.0	$1.6	$1.8
% of total $	1.2%	1.9%	1.7%

> The 1978 funding level is distressing because a 1976 census report officially recorded the Hispanic population then at 6.7%, and an earlier Endowment study showed that the percentage of professional Hispanic artists in the artists labor force exceeded slightly the percentage of Hispanics in the total force (Quirarte, 1979, p. 54-55).

This information is particularily disturbing in light of the fact that the 6.7% population figure is based on 1976 census data. The comparison that the reader may tend to make would be one of a population level at 6.7% to a funding level of 1.7%. But the recent census should serve to prove the great disparity that truly exists between funding levels and a more realistic population figure. Current estimates show the Hispanic population to be at approximately "19 million and growing" (Time Magazine, October 16, 1978, p. 48).

Data such as presented only serves to further exemplify the lack of support for Chicano art. Although the data is compiled and given for the nation's largest arts philanthropist, the figures for the large corporations and foundations would probably be far behind those of the government.

Developments

Because of the value of the expression of the Chicano aesthetic and it's lack of support, CHAC was created. The Chicano Humanities and Arts Council (CHAC), is an organization of individual Chicano artists and Chicano organizations dedicated to the arts and humanities. While the idea of coming together is relatively new, the various components that make up CHAC represent many years of artistic endeavors. The

members of CHAC, in the past decade have shared with one another in various festivals and presentations in order to bring to the community a more comprehensive picture of the total Chicano aesthetic.

To understand why we refer to our work as Chicano art, Chicano literature, Chicano expression, we must place ourselves, the exponents of this art, in a historical perspective.

Through historical consequence many Chicanos are descendants of what is an Indio-Hispano-Mexicano-Anglo experience. In the process of retaining our cultural values and at the same time adjusting to new and differing value systems, a unique aesthetic is conceived and given genesis.

Mythology

As a result, it is time to discuss some of the various myths which have prevailed regarding this art form. First of all, the Chicano art form is not confined to mere political expression. Eventhough, as an oppressed and discriminated against minority, political themes have dominated this art expression, the aesthetic is full of historical wealth and cultural reality. Naturally, as this reality changes, so will the form and expression.

Secondly, the art form is not regional nor provincial but universal. The universitality of this aesthetic was presented in the initial section of this exposition.

Thirdly, the Chicano art aesthetic is not a fad of the sixties but a continuum of Hispano-Indio-Mexicano-Anglo influences. Just as we are historically linked to toiling the land as farmworkers, the aesthetic is also an expression of times flowering, giving fruit, suffering from the lack of sun or the long draughts - but, always with the roots fully alive.

The final myth to be addressed is that the Chicano only creates for

his own community. The not-for-other-communities myth is a poor excuse to limit the few resources which trickle down. Unfortunately, the logic and rationale are weak and unfounded. As previously discussed, the Chicano aesthetic serves as a universal extension of man's self.

Conclusion

In closing, it is important to cite the conclusion of the investigations of the President's Task Force on Hispanic American Arts. The Task Force found that the acute needs of the Hispanic artistic community fall into four basic inter-related categories. They are: "1) Financial Support; 2) Individual Achievement; 3) Strong Organizations; and, 4) Increased Communication and Understanding" (Quirarte, 1979, p.49). As CHAC, we propose to be a strong organization which will increase communication and understanding. It will be only through the support of the philanthropic institutions of our nation that we can attain the financial support necessary to do this work and provide our artists with opportunities towards their enhanced individual achievements.

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